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SOCIOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES THE SOCIAL ORGANISM AND THE COLLECTIVE MIND

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ABSTRACT

The problem of the social organism, inherited from Comte and Spencer, is the rock upon which the modern schools of sociology have split. Society is composed of parts that have the power of independent locomotion. The fundamental problem of sociology is how to conceive the relations between the parts in such a way as to explain the fact that societies do behave as units. This is the problem of social control. Just as psychology is an account of the manner in which the individual organism exercises control over its parts or rather of the manner in which these parts co-operate to carry a corporate existence, so sociology is a point of view and method for investigating the processes by which individuals are inducted into and induced to co-operate in some sort of corporate existence which we call society. Sociology is the science of collective behavior.

V. THE SOCIAL ORGANISM: HUMANITY OR LEVIATHAN?

After Comte the first great name in the history of sociology is Spencer. It is evident in comparing the writings of these two men that, in crossing the English Channel, sociology has suffered a sea change. In spite of certain similarities in their points of view there are profound and interesting differences. These differences exhibit themselves in the different ways in which they use the term "social organism."

Comte calls society a "collective organism" and insists, as Spencer does, upon the difference between an organism like a family, which is made up of independent individuals, and an organism like a plant or an animal, which is a physiological unit

in which the different organs are neither free nor conscious. But Spencer, if he points out the differences between the social and the biological organisms, is interested in the analogy. Comte, on the other hand, while he recognizes the analogy, feels it important to emphasize the distinctions.

Society for Comte is not, as Lévy-Bruhl puts it, "a polyp." It has not even the characteristics of an animal colony in which the individuals are physically bound together, though physiologically independent. On the contrary, "this 'immense organism' is especially distinguished from other beings in that it is made up of separable elements of which each one can feel its own co-operation, can will it, or even withhold it, so long as it remains a direct one."¹

On the other hand, Comte, although he characterized the social *consensus* and solidarity as "collective," nevertheless thought of the relations existing between human beings in society—in the family, for example, which he regards as the unit and model of all social relations—as closer and more intimate than those which exist between the organs of a plant or an animal. The individual, as Comte expressed it, is an abstraction. Man exists as man only by participation in the life of humanity, and "although the individual elements of society appear to be more separable than those of a living being, the social *consensus* is still closer than the vital."²

Thus the individual man was, in spite of his freedom and independence, in a very real sense "an organ of the Great Being" and the great being was humanity. Under the title of humanity Comte included not merely all living human beings, i.e., the human race, but he included all that body of tradition, knowledge, custom, cultural ideas and ideals, which make up the social inheritance of the race, an inheritance into which each of us is born, to which we contribute, and which we inevitably hand on through the processes of education and tradition to succeeding generations. This is what Comte meant by the social organism.

If Comte thought of the social organism, the great being, somewhat mystically as itself an individual and a person, Herbert

¹ L. Lévy-Bruhl, *The Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, authorized translation; an Introduction by Frederic Harrison (New York, 1903), p. 337.

² *Ibid.*, p. 234.

Spencer, on the other hand, thought of it realistically as a great animal, a leviathan, as Hobbes called it, and a very low-order, leviathan at that.¹

Spencer's manner of looking at the social organism may be illustrated in what he says about growth in "social aggregates."

When we say that growth is common to social aggregates and organic aggregates, we do not thus entirely exclude community with inorganic aggregates. Some of these, as crystals, grow in a visible manner; and all of them on the hypothesis of evolution, have arisen by integration at some time or other. Nevertheless, compared with things we call inanimate, living bodies and societies so conspicuously exhibit augmentation of mass, that we may fairly regard this as characterizing them both. Many organisms grow throughout their lives; and the rest grow throughout considerable parts of their lives. Social growth usually continues either up to times when the societies divide, or up to times when they are overwhelmed.

Here, then, is the first trait by which societies ally themselves with the organic world and substantially distinguish themselves from the inorganic world.²

In this same way, comparing the characteristic general features of "social" and "living bodies," noting likeness and differences, particularly with reference to complexity of structure, differentiation of function, division of labor, etc., Spencer gives a perfectly naturalistic account of the characteristic identities and differences between societies and animals, between sociological and biological organizations. It is in respect to the division of labor that the analogy between societies and animals goes farthest and is most significant.

This division of labour, first dwelt upon by political economists as a social phenomenon, and thereupon recognized by biologists as a phenomenon of

¹ Hobbes's statement is as follows: "For by art is created that great *Leviathan* called a *Commonwealth*, or *State*, in Latin *Civitas*, which is but an artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which the *sovereignty* is an artificial *soul*, as giving life and motion to the whole body; the *magistrates*, and other *officers* of judicature artificial *joints*; *reward* and *punishment*, by which fastened to the seat of the sover^leighty every joint and member is moved to perform his duty, are the *nerves*, that do the same in the body natural." Spencer criticizes this conception of Hobbes as representing society as a "factitious" and artificial rather than a "natural" product. Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology* (London, 1893), I, 437, 579-80. See also chap. iii, "Social Growth," pp. 453-58.

² *Ibid.*, I, 437.

living bodies, which they called the "physiological division of labour," is that which in the society, as in the animal, makes it a living whole. Scarcely can I emphasize enough the truth that in respect of this fundamental trait, a social organism and an individual organism are entirely alike.¹

The "social aggregate," although it is "discrete" instead of "concrete"—that is to say, composed of specially separated units—is nevertheless, because of the mutual dependence of these units upon one another as exhibited in the division of labor, to be regarded as a living whole. It is "a living whole" in much the same way that the plant and animal communities, of which the ecologists are now writing so interestingly, are a living whole; not because of any intrinsic relations between the individuals who compose them, but because each individual member of the community, finds in the community as a whole, a suitable milieu, an environment adapted to his needs and one to which he is able to adapt himself.

Of such a society as this it may indeed be said, that it "exists for the benefit of its members, not its members for the benefit of society. It has ever to be remembered that great as may be the efforts made for the prosperity of the body politic, yet the claims of the body politic are nothing in themselves, and become something only in so far as they embody the claims of its component individuals."²

In other words, the social organism, as Spencer sees it, exists not for itself but for the benefit of the separate organs of which it is composed, whereas, in the case of biological organism the situation is reversed. There the parts manifestly exist for the whole and not the whole for the parts.

Spencer explains this paradoxical conclusion by the reflexion that in social organisms sentience is not localized as it is in biological organisms. This is, in fact, the cardinal difference between the two. There is no *social sensorium*.

In the one (the individual), consciousness is concentrated in a small part of the aggregate. In the other (society), it is diffused throughout the aggregate: all the units possess the capacities for happiness and misery, if not in equal degrees, still in degrees that approximate. As then, there is no social

¹ Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Sociology* (London, 1893), I, 440.

² *Ibid.*, p. 450.

sensorium, the welfare of the aggregate, considered apart from that of the units, is not an end to be sought. The society exists for the benefit of its members; not its members for the benefit of the society.¹

The point is that society, *as distinct from the individuals* who compose it, has no apparatus for feeling pain or pleasure. There are no *social* sensations. Perceptions and mental imagery are individual and not social phenomena. Society lives, so to speak, only in its separate organs or members, and each of these organs has its own brain and organ of control which gives it, among other things, the power of independent locomotion. This is what is meant when society is described as a collectivity.

VI. SOCIAL CONTROL AND SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

The fundamental problem which Spencer's paradox raises is that of social control. How does a mere collection of individuals succeed in acting in a corporate and consistent way? How in the case of specific types of social group, for example an animal herd, a boys' gang, or a political party, does the group control its individual members; the whole dominate the parts? What are the specific *sociological* differences between plant and animal communities and human society? What kind of differences are *sociological differences*, and what do we mean in general by the expression "sociological" anyway?

Since Spencer's essay on the social organism was published in 1860,² this problem and these questions, in one form or another, have largely absorbed the theoretical interest of students of society. The attempts to answer them may be said to have created the existing schools into which sociologists are divided.

A certain school of writers, among them Paul Lilienfeld, Auguste Schäffle, and René Worms, have sought to maintain, to extend, or modify the biological analogy first advanced by Spencer. In doing so they have succeeded sometimes in restating the problem but have not solved it. René Worms has been particularly ingenious in discovering identities and carrying out the parallelism between the social and the biological organizations. As a result he has reached the conclusion that, as between a social and a

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 449-50.

² *Westminster Review*, January, 1860.

biological organism, there is no difference of kind but only one of degree. Spencer, who could not find a "social sensorium" said that society was conscious only in the individuals who composed it. Worms, on the other hand, declares that we must assume the existence of a social consciousness, even without a sensorium, because we see everywhere the evidence of its existence.

Force manifests itself by its effects. If there are certain phenomena that we can only make intelligible, provided we regard them as the products of collective social consciousness, then we are bound to assume the existence of such a consciousness. There are many illustrations . . . the attitude, for example, of a crowd in the presence of a crime. Here the sentiment of indignation is unanimous. A murder, if taken in the act, will get summary justice from the ordinary crowd. That method of rendering justice, "lynch law" is deplorable, but it illustrates the intensity of the sentiment which, at the moment, takes possession of the social consciousness.

Thus, always in the presence of great and common danger the collective consciousness of society is awakened; for example France of the Valois after the Treaty of Troyes, or modern France before the invasion of 1791 and before the German invasion in 1870; or Germany, herself, after the victories of Napoleon I. This sentiment of national unity, born of resistance to the stranger, goes so far that a large proportion of the members of society do not hesitate to give their lives for the safety and glory of the state, at such a moment the individual comprehends that he is only a small part of a large whole and that he belongs to the collectivity of which he is a member. The proof that he is entirely penetrated by the social consciousness is the fact that in order to maintain its existence he is willing to sacrifice his own.¹

There is no question that the facts of crowd excitement, of class, caste, race, and national consciousness, do show the way in which the individual members of a group are, or seem to be, dominated, at certain moments and under certain circumstances, by the group as a whole. Worms gives to this fact, and the phenomena which accompany it, the title "collective consciousness." This gives the problem a name, to be sure, but not a solution. What the purpose of sociology requires is a description and an explanation. Under what conditions, precisely, does this phenomenon of collective consciousness arise? What are the mechanisms—physical, physiological, and social—by which the group imposes its

¹ René Worms, *Organisme et Société*, "Bibliothèque Sociologique Internationale" (Paris, 1896), pp. 210-13.

control, or what seems to be control, upon the individual members of the group?

This question had arisen and been answered by political philosophers, in terms of political philosophy, long before sociology attempted to give an objective account of the matter. Two classic phrases, Aristotle's "Man is a political animal" and Hobbes's "War of each against all," *omnes bellum omnium*, measure the range and divergence of the schools upon this topic.

According to Hobbes, the existing moral and political order—that is to say the organization of control—is in any community a mere artefact, a control resting on consent, supported by a prudent calculation of consequences, and enforced by an external power. Aristotle, on the other hand, taught that man was made for life in society just as the bee is made for life in the hive. The relations between the sexes, as well as those between mother and child, are manifestly predetermined in the physiological organization of the individual man and woman. Furthermore, man is, by his instincts and his inherited dispositions, predestined to a social existence beyond the intimate family circle. Society must be conceived, therefore, as a part of nature, like a beaver's dam or the nests of birds.

As a matter of fact, man and society present themselves in a double aspect. They are at the same time products of nature and of human artifice. Just as a stone hammer in the hand of a savage may be regarded as an artificial extension of the natural man, so tools, machinery, technical and administrative devices, including the formal organization of government and the informal "political machine," may be regarded as more or less artificial extensions of the natural social group.

So far as this is true, the conflict between Hobbes and Aristotle is not absolute. Society is a product both of nature and of design, of instinct and of reason. If, in its formal aspect, society is therefore an artefact, it is one which connects up with and has its roots in nature and in human nature.

This does not explain social control but simplifies the problem of corporate action. It makes clear, at any rate, that as members of society, men act as they do elsewhere from motives they do not

fully comprehend, in order to fulfil aims of which they are but dimly or not at all conscious. Men are activated, in short, not merely by interests, in which they are conscious of the end they seek, but also by instincts and sentiments, the source and meaning of which they do not clearly comprehend. Men work for wages, but they will die to preserve their status in society, or commit murder to resent an insult. When men act thus instinctively, or under the influence of the mores, they are usually quite unconscious of the sources of the impulses that animate them or of the ends which are realized through their acts. Under the influence of the mores men act typically, and so representatively, not as individuals but as members of a group.

The simplest type of social group in which we may observe "social control" is in a herd or a flock. The behavior of a herd of cattle is, to be sure, not so uniform nor so simple a matter as it seems to the casual observer, but it may be very properly taken as an illustration of the sort of follow-the-leader uniformity that is more or less characteristic of all social groups. We call the disposition to live in the herd and to move in masses, gregariousness, and this gregariousness is ordinarily regarded as an instinct and undoubtedly is pretty largely determined in the original nature of gregarious animals.

There is a school of thought which seeks in the so-called gregarious instincts an explanation of all that is characteristically social in the behavior of human beings.

The cardinal quality of the herd is homogeneity. It is clear that the great advantage of the social habit is to enable large numbers to act as one, whereby in the case of the hunting gregarious animal strength in pursuit and attack is at once increased to beyond that of the creatures preyed upon, and in protective socialism the sensitiveness of the new unit to alarms is greatly in excess of that of the individual member of the flock.

To secure these advantages of homogeneity, it is evident that the members of the herd must possess sensitiveness to the behaviour of their fellows. The individual isolated will be of no meaning, the individual as a part of the herd will be capable of transmitting the most potent impulses. Each member of the flock tending to follow its neighbour and in turn to be followed, each is in some sense capable of leadership; but no lead will be followed that departs widely from normal behaviour. A lead will be followed only from its resemblance to the normal. If the leader go so far ahead as definitely to cease to be in the herd, he will necessarily be ignored.

The original in conduct, that is to say, resistiveness to the voice of the herd, will be suppressed by natural selection; the wolf which does not follow the impulses of the herd will be starved; the sheep which does not respond to the flock will be eaten.

Again, not only will the individual be responsive to impulses coming from the herd, but he will treat the herd as his normal environment. The impulse to be in and always to remain with the herd will have the strongest instinctive weight. Anything which tends to separate him from his fellows, as soon as it becomes perceptible as such will be strongly resisted.¹

According to sociologists of this school public opinion, conscience, and authority in the state rest upon the natural disposition of the animal in the herd to conform to "the decrees of the herd."

Conscience, then, and the feelings of guilt and of duty are the peculiar possessions of the gregarious animal. A dog and a cat caught in the commission of an offence will both recognize that punishment is coming; but the dog, moreover, knows that he has done *wrong*, and he will come to be punished, unwillingly it is true, and as if dragged along by some power outside him, while the cat's sole impulse is to escape. The rational recognition of the sequence of act and punishment is equally clear to the gregarious and to the solitary animal, but it is the former only who understands that he has committed a *crime*, who has, in fact, the *sense of sin*.²

The concepts upon which this explanation of society rests is *homogeneity*. If animals or human beings act under all circumstances in the same way, they will act or seem to act, as if they had a common purpose. If everybody follows the crowd, if everyone wears the same clothes, utters the same trite remarks, rallies to the same battle cries and is everywhere dominated, even in his most characteristically individual behavior, by an instinctive and passionate desire to conform to an external model and to the wishes of the herd, then we have an explanation of everything characteristic of society—except the variants, the nonconformists, the idealists, and the rebels. The herd instinct may be an explanation of conformity but it does not explain variation. Variation is an important fact in society as it is in nature generally.

Homogeneity and like-mindedness are, as explanations of the social behavior of men and animals, very closely related concepts.

¹ W. Trotter, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (New York, 1916), pp. 29-30.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

In "like response to like stimulus," we may discern the beginning of "concerted action" and this, it is urged, is the fundamental social fact. This is the "like-mindedness" theory of society which has been given wide popularity in the United States through the writings of Professor Franklin Henry Giddings. He describes it as a "developed form of the instinct theory, dating back to Aristotle's aphorism that man is a political animal."

Any given stimulus may happen to be felt by more than one organism, at the same or at different times. Two or more organisms may respond to the same given stimulus simultaneously or at different times. They may respond to the same given stimulus in like or in unlike ways; in the same or in different degrees; with like or with unlike promptitude; with equal or with unequal persistence. I have attempted to show that in like response to the same given stimulus we have the beginning, the absolute origin, of all concerted activity—the inception of every conceivable form of co-operation; while in unlike response, and in unequal response, we have the beginning of all those processes of individuation, of differentiation, of competition, which in their endlessly varied relations to combination, to co-operation, bring about the infinite complexity of organized social life.¹

Closely related, logically if not historically, to Giddings' conception of "like-mindedness" is Gabriel Tarde's conception of "imitation." If for Giddings "like response to like stimulus" is the fundamental social fact, for Tarde "imitation" is the process through which alone society exists. Society, said Tarde, exists in imitation. As a matter of fact, Tarde's doctrine may be regarded as a corollary to Giddings'. Imitation is the process by which that like-mindedness, by which Giddings explains corporate action, is effected. Men are not born like-minded, they are made so by imitation.

This minute inter-agreement of minds and wills, which forms the basis of the social life, even in troublous times—this presence of so many common ideas, ends, and means, in the minds and wills of all members of the same society at any given moment—is not due, I maintain, to organic heredity, which insures the birth of men quite similar to one another, nor to mere identity of geographical environment, which offers very similar resources to talents that are nearly equal; it is rather the effect of that suggestion-imitation process which, starting from one primitive creature possessed of a single idea or act, passed this copy on to one of its neighbors, then to another, and so on. Organic

¹ Franklin Henry Giddings, *The Concepts and Methods of Sociology*, Congress of Arts and Science, Universal Exposition (St. Louis, 1904), pp. 789-90.

needs and spiritual tendencies exist in us only as potentialities which are realizable under the most diverse forms, in spite of their primitive similarity; and, among all these possible realizations, the indications furnished by some first initiator who is imitated determine which one is actually chosen.¹

In contrast with these schools, which interpret action in terms of the herd and the flock—i.e., men act together because they act alike—is the theory of Émile Durkheim who insists that the social group has real corporate existence and that, in human societies at least, men act together not because they have like purposes but a *common purpose*. This common purpose imposes itself upon the individual members of a society at the same time as an ideal, a wish, and an obligation. Conscience, the sense of obligation which members of a group feel only when there is conflict between the wishes of the individual and the will of the group, is a manifestation, *in* the individual consciousness, of the collective mind and the group will. The mere fact that in a panic or a stampede, human beings will sometimes, like the Gadarene swine, rush down a steep place into the sea, is a very positive indication of like-mindedness but not an evidence of a common purpose. The difference between an animal herd and a human crowd is that the crowd, what Le Bon calls the “organized crowd,” the crowd “in being” to use a nautical term, is dominated by an impulse to achieve a purpose that is common to every member of the group. Men in a state of panic, on the other hand, although equally under the influence of the mass excitement, act not corporately but individually, each individual wildly seeking to save his own skin. Men in a state of panic have like purposes but no common purpose. If the “organized crowd,” “the psychological crowd,” is a society “in being,” the panic and the stampede is a society “in dissolution.”

Durkheim does not use these illustrations nor does he express himself in these terms. The conception of the “organized” or “psychological” crowd is not his, but Le Bon’s. The fact is that Durkheim does not think of a society as a mere sum of particulars. Neither does he think of the sentiments nor the opinions which dominate the social group as private and subjective. When individuals come together *under certain circumstances*, the opinions and sentiments which they held as individuals are modified and changed

¹ G. Tarde, *Social Laws, an Outline of Sociology* (New York, 1899), pp. 38-39.

under the influence of the new contacts. Out of the fermentation which association breeds, a new something (*autre chose*) is produced, an opinion and sentiment, in other words, that is not the sum of, and not like, the sentiments and opinions of the individuals from which it is derived. This new sentiment and opinion is public, and social, and the evidence of this is the fact that it imposes itself upon the individuals concerned as something more or less external to them. They feel it either as an inspiration, a sense of personal release and expansion, or as an obligation, a pressure and an inhibition. The characteristic social phenomenon is just this control by the group as a whole of the individuals that compose it. This fact of control, then, is the fundamental social fact.

Now society also gives the sensation of a perpetual dependence. Since it has a nature which is peculiar to itself and different from our individual nature, it pursues ends which are likewise special to it; but, as it cannot attain them except through our intermediacy, it imperiously demands our aid. It requires that, forgetful of our own interests, we make ourselves its servitors, and it submits us to every sort of inconvenience, privation, and sacrifice, without which social life would be impossible. It is because of this that at every instant we are obliged to submit ourselves to rules of conduct and of thought which we have neither made nor desired, and which are sometimes even contrary to our most fundamental inclinations and instincts.

Even if society were unable to maintain these concessions and sacrifices from us except by a material constraint, it might awaken in us only the idea of a physical force to which we must give way of necessity, instead of that of a moral power such as religions adore. But as a matter of fact, the empire which it holds over consciences is due much less to the physical supremacy of which it has the privilege than to the moral authority with which it is invested. If we yield to its orders, it is not merely because it is strong enough to triumph over our resistance; it is primarily because it is the object of a venerable respect.

Now the ways of action to which society is strongly enough attached to impose them upon its members, are, by that very fact, marked with a distinctive sign provocative of respect. Since they are elaborated in common, the vigour with which they have been thought of by each particular mind is retained in all the other minds, and reciprocally. The representations which express them within each of us have an intensity which no purely private states of consciousness could ever attain; for they have the strength of the innumerable individual representations which have served to form each of them. It is society who speaks through the mouths of those who affirm them in our presence; it is society whom we hear in hearing them; and the voice of all

has an accent which that of one alone could never have. The very violence with which society reacts, by way of blame or material suppression, against every attempted dissidence, contributes to strengthening its empire by manifesting the common conviction through this burst of ardour. In a word, when something is the object of such a state of opinion, the representation which each individual has of it gains a power of action from its origins and the conditions in which it was born, which even those feel who do not submit themselves to it. It tends to repel the representations which contradict it, and it keeps them at a distance; on the other hand it commands those acts which will realize it, and it does so, not by a material coercion or by the perspective of something of this sort, but by the simple radiation of the mental energy which it contains.¹

But the same social forces, which are found organized in public opinion, in religious symbols, in social convention, in fashion, and in science—for “if a people did not have faith in science all the scientific demonstrations in the world would be without any influence whatsoever over their minds”—are constantly re-creating the old order, making new heroes, overthrowing old gods, creating new myths, and imposing new ideals. And this is the nature of the cultural process of which sociology is a description and an explanation.

VII. SOCIAL CONTROL AND THE COLLECTIVE MIND

Durkheim is sometimes referred to, in comparison with other contemporary sociologists, as a realist. This is a reference to the controversy of the medieval philosophers in regard to the nature of concepts. Those who thought a concept a mere class-name applied to a group of objects because of some common characteristics were called nominalists. Those who thought the concept was *real*, and not the name of a mere collection of individuals, were realists. In this sense Tarde and Giddings and all those writers who think of society as a collection of actually or potentially *like-minded* persons would be nominalists, while other writers like Simmel, Ratzenhofer, and Small, who think of society in terms of interaction and social process may be called realists. They are realist, at any rate, in so far as they think of the members of a society as bound together in a system of mutual influences which has sufficient character to be described as a process.

¹ Émile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York), pp. 206-8.

Naturally this process cannot be conceived of in terms of space or physical proximity alone. Social contacts and social forces are of a subtler sort but not less real than physical. We know, for example, that vocations are largely determined by personal competition; that the solidarity of what Sumner calls the "in" or "we" group is largely determined by its conflict with the "out" or "other" groups. We know, also, that the status and social position of any individual inside any social group is determined by his relation to all other members of that group and eventually of all other groups. These are illustrations of what is meant concretely by social interaction and social process and it is considerations of this kind which seem to justify certain writers in thinking of individual persons as "parts" and of society as a "whole" in some other sense than that in which a dust heap is a whole of which the individual particles are parts.

Society not only continues to exist *by* transmission, *by* communication, but it may fairly be said to exist *in* transmission, *in* communication. There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication.¹

Communication, if not identical with, is at least a form of, what has been referred to here as social interaction. But communication as Dewey has defined the term, is something more and different than what Tarde calls "inter-stimulation." Communication is a process by which we "transmit" an experience from an individual to another but it is also a process by which these same individuals get a common experience.

Try the experiment of communicating, with fullness and accuracy, some experience to another, especially if it be somewhat complicated, and you will find your own attitude toward your experience changing; otherwise you resort to expletives and ejaculations. Except in dealing with commonplaces and catch phrases one has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another's experience in order to tell him intelligently of one's own experience. All communication is like art.²

Not only does communication involve the creation, out of experiences that are individual and private, an experience that is common and public but such a common experience becomes the

¹ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York, 1916), p. 5.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

basis for a common and public existence in which every individual, to greater or less extent, participates and is himself a part. Furthermore, as a part of this common life, there grows up a body of custom, convention, tradition, ceremonial, language, social ritual, public opinion, in short all that Sumner includes under the term "mores" and all that ethnologists include under the term "culture."

The thing that characterizes Durkheim and his followers is their insistence upon the fact that all cultural materials, and expressions, including language, science, religion, public opinion, and law, since they are the products of social intercourse and social interaction, are bound to have an objective, public, and social character such as no product of an individual mind either has or can have. Durkheim speaks of these mental products, individual and social, as representations. The characteristic product of the individual mind is the percept, or, as Durkheim describes it, the "individual representation." The percept is, and remains, a private and an individual matter. No one can reproduce, or communicate to another, subjective impressions or the mental imagery in the concrete form in which they come to the individual himself. My neighbor may be able to read my "thoughts" and understand the motives that impel me to action better than I understand myself, but he cannot reproduce the images, with just the fringes of sense and feeling with which they come to my mind.

The characteristic product of a group of individuals, in their efforts to communicate is, on the other hand, something objective and understood, that is, a gesture, a sign, a symbol, a word, or a concept in which an experience or purpose that was private becomes public. This gesture, sign, symbol, concept, or representation in which a common object is not merely indicated, but in a sense created, Durkheim calls a "collective representation."

Dewey's description of what takes place in communication may be taken as a description of the process by which these collective representations come into existence. "To formulate an experience," as Dewey says, "requires getting outside of it, seeing it as another would see it, considering what points of contact it has with the life of another so that it may be gotten into such form

that he can appreciate its meaning." The result of such a conscious effort to communicate an experience is to transform it. The experience, after it has been communicated, is not the same for either party to the communication. To publish or to give publicity to an event is to make of that event something other than it was before publication. Furthermore, the event as published is still something different from the event as reflected in the minds of the individuals to whom the publication is addressed.

It will be evident upon reflection that public opinion is not the opinion of all, nor even of a majority of the persons who compose a public. As a matter of fact, what we ordinarily mean by public opinion is never the opinion of anyone in particular. It is composite opinion, representing a general tendency of the public as a whole. On the other hand, we recognize that public opinion exists, even when we do not know of any individual person, among those who compose the public, whose private and personal opinion exactly coincides with that of the public of which he or she is a part.

Nevertheless, the private and personal opinion of an individual who participates in making public opinion is influenced by the opinions of those around him, and by public opinion. In this sense every opinion is public opinion.

Public opinion, in respect to the manner in which it is formed and the manner in which it exists—that is to say relatively independent of the individuals who co-operate to form it—has the characteristics of collective representation in general. Collective representations are objective, in just the sense that public opinion is objective, and they impose themselves upon the individual as public opinion does, as relatively but not wholly external forces—stabilizing, standardizing, conventionalizing, as well as stimulating, extending, and generalizing individual representations, percepts.

The collective representations are exterior to the individual consciousnesses because they are not derived from the individuals taken in isolation but from their convergence and union (concours). . . . Doubtless, in the elaboration of the common result, each (individual) bears his due share; but the private sentiments do not become social except by combining under the action of the forces *sui generis* which association develops. As a result of these combinations, and of the mutual alterations which result therefrom, they (the private

sentiments) become something else (*autre chose*). A chemical synthesis results, which concentrates, unifies, the elements synthetized, and by that very process transforms them. . . . The resultant derived therefrom extends then beyond (*deborde*) the individual mind as the whole is greater than the part. To know really what it is, one must take the aggregate in its totality. It is this that thinks, that feels, that wills, although it may not be able to will, feel, or act save by the intermediation of individual consciousnesses.¹

This, then, after nearly a century of criticism, is what remains of Comte's conception of the social organism. If society is, as the realists insist, anything more than a collection of like-minded individuals, it is so because of the existence (1) of a social process and (2) of a body of tradition and opinion—the products of this process—which has a relatively objective character and imposes itself upon the individual as a form of control, social control. This process and its product are the social consciousness. The social consciousness, in its double aspect as process and product, is the social organism. The controversy between the realists and the nominalists reduces itself apparently to this question of the objectivity of social tradition and of public opinion. For the present we may let it rest there.

Meanwhile the conceptions of the social consciousness and the social mind have been adopted by writers on social topics who are not at all concerned with their philosophical implications or legitimacy. We are just now seeing the first manifestations of two new types of sociology which call themselves, the one rural and the other urban sociology. Writers belonging to these two schools are making studies of what they call the "rural" and the "urban" minds. In using these terms they are not always quite certain whether the mind of which they are thinking is a collective mind, in Durkheim's realistic sense of the word, or whether it is the mind of the typical inhabitant of a rural or an urban community, an instance of "like-mindedness," in the sense of Giddings and the nominalists.

¹ Émile Durkheim, "Représentations individuelles et représentation collectives." *Revue métaphysique*, VI (—) 295. Quoted and translated by Charles Elmer Gehlke, "Émile Durkheim's Contributions to Sociological Theory," *Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law*, LXIII, 29-30.

A similar usage of the word "mind," "the American mind," for example, is common in describing characteristic differences in the attitudes of different nations and their "nationals."

The origin of the phrase, "the American mind," was political. Shortly after the middle of the eighteenth century, there began to be a distinctly American way of regarding the debatable question of British Imperial control. During the period of the Stamp Act agitation our colonial-bred politicians and statesmen made the discovery that there was a mode of thinking and feeling which was native—or had by that time become a second nature—to all the colonists. Jefferson, for example, employs those resonant and useful words "the American mind" to indicate that throughout the American colonies an essential unity of opinion had been developed as regards the chief political question of the day.¹

Here again, it is not quite clear, whether the American mind is a name for a characteristic uniformity in the minds of individual Americans: whether the phrase refers rather to an "essential unity of opinion," or whether, finally, it is intended to cover both the uniformity and the unity characteristic of American opinion.

Students of labor problems and of the so-called class struggle, on the other hand, use the term "psychology" in much the same way that the students of rural and urban sociology use the term "mind." They speak of the "psychology" of the laboring class, the "psychology" of the capitalistic class, in cases where psychology seems to refer indifferently either to the social attitudes of the members of a class, or to attitude and morale of the class as a whole.

The terms "class-conscious" and "class-consciousness," "national" and "racial" consciousness are now familiar terms to students although they seem to have been used, first of all, by the so-called "intelligentsia" who have been the leaders in the various types of mass movement to which these terms apply. "Consciousness," in the sense in which it is here used, has a similar, though somewhat different, connotation than the word "mind" when applied to a group. It is a name not merely for the attitudes characteristic of certain races or classes, but for these attitudes when they are in the focus of attention of the group, in the "fore-consciousness," to use a Freudian term. In this sense "conscious" suggests not merely the submergence of the individual and the

¹ Bliss Perry, *The American Mind* (Boston, 1912), p. 47.

consequent solidarity of the group, but it signifies a mental mobilization and preparedness of the individual and of the group for collective or corporate action. To be class-conscious is to be prepared to act in the sense of that class.

There is implicit in this rather ambiguous popular usage of the terms "social mind" and "social consciousness" a recognition of the dual aspect of society and of social groups. Society may be regarded at the same time from an individualsitic and a collectivistic point of view. Looking at it from the point of view of the individual, we regard as social just that character of the individual which has been imparted to, and impressed upon, him as a result of his participation in the life of the group. Social psychology, from Baldwin's first studies of the development of personality in the child to Ellwood's studies of the society in its "psychological aspects" has been mainly concerned with the investigation of the effects upon the individual of his contacts with other individuals.¹

On the other hand, we have had, in the description of the crowd and the public by Le Bon, Tarde, Sighele, and their successors, the beginnings of a study of collective behavior and "corporate action." In these two points of view we seem to have again the contrast and the opposition, already referred to, between the nominalistic and realistic conceptions of society. Nominalism, represented by social psychology, emphasizes, or seems to emphasize, the independence of the individual. Realism, represented by collective psychology, emphasizes the control of the group over the individual, of the whole over the part.

While it is true that society has this double aspect, the individual and the collective, it is the assumption of this volume that the touchstone of society, the thing that distinguishes a mere collection of individuals from a society is not like-mindedness, but corporate action. We may apply the term social to any group of individuals which is capable of consistent action, that is to say, action, consciously or unconsciously, directed to a common end. This existence of a common end is perhaps all that can be

¹ James Mark Baldwin, *Mental Development in the Child and the Race* (New York and London, 1895); Charles A. Ellwood, *Sociology in Its Psychological Aspects* (New York and London, 1912).

legitimately included in the conception "organic" as applied to society.

From this point of view social control is the central fact and the central problem of society. Just as psychology may be regarded as an account of the manner in which the individual organism, as a whole, exercises control over its parts or rather of the manner in which the parts co-operate together to carry on the corporate existence of the whole, so sociology, speaking strictly, is a point of view and a method for investigating the processes by which individuals are inducted into and induced to co-operate in some sort of permanent corporate existence which we call society.

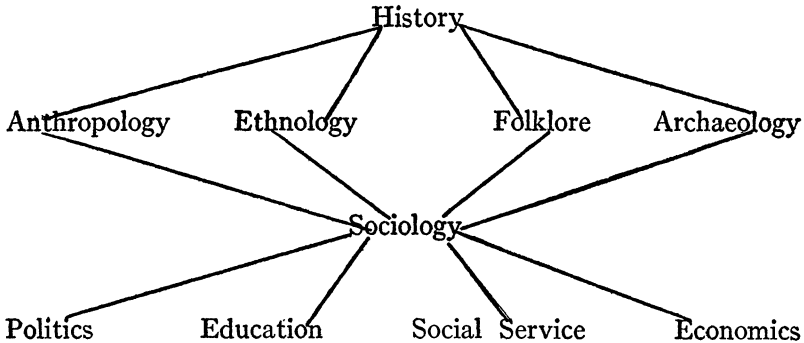


FIG. 1

To put this emphasis on corporate action is not to overlook the fact that through this corporate action the individual member of society is largely formed, not to say created. It recognized, however, that if corporate action tends to make of the individual an instrument, as well as an organic part, of the social group, it does not do this by making him "like" merely; it may do so by making him "different." The division of labor, in making possible an ever larger and wider co-operation among men, has indirectly multiplied individual diversities. What like-mindedness must eventually mean, if it is to mean anything, is the existence of so much of a consensus among the individuals of a group as will permit the group to act. This, then, is what is meant here by society, the social organism and the social group.

Sociology, so far as it can be regarded as a fundamental science and not mere congeries of social-welfare programs and practices, may be described as the science of collective behavior. With this definition it is possible to indicate in a general and schematic way its relation to the other social sciences.

Historically, sociology has had its origin in history. History has been and is the great mother science of all the social sciences. Of history it may be said nothing human is foreign to it. Anthropology, ethnology, folklore, and archaeology have grown up largely, if not wholly, to complete the task which history began and answer the questions which historical investigation first raised. In history and the sciences associated with it, i.e., ethnology, folklore, and archaeology, we have the concrete records of that human nature and experience which sociology has sought to explain. In the same sense that history is the concrete, sociology is the abstract, science of human experience and human nature.

On the other hand, the technical (applied) social sciences, that is, politics, education, social service, and economics—so far as economics may be regarded as the science of business—are related to sociology in a different way. They are, to a greater or lesser extent, applications of principles which it is the business of sociology and of psychology to deal with explicitly. In so far as this is true, sociology may be regarded as fundamental to the other social sciences.